

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLIES OF SCOTLAND.

INTERESTING LETTER FROM A CANADIAN VISITOR.

For the Record:—

The Assemblies of the two great Presbyterian bodies of Scotland meet on the same day of the year, and at the same hour of the day; the respective halls in which the venerable divines meet being separated only by a street. The opening day, which is generally the Thursday before the Queen's birthday, is observed as a general holiday all over the Scottish capital. Stores are closed, business is suspended, flags are flying and cannons are booming.

THE "KIRK" ASSEMBLY.

Before the opening of the Established Church Assembly, the Queen's representative, the Lord High Commissioner, holds a levee in Holyrood Palace, when the clergymen of that denomination, and visitors, are presented to him.

Being somewhat curious to see the opening of the State Church, I made my way to the old Palace on the eventful morning. Judging from the great military array, the abundance of pipers and bands of various kinds, I would have thought it was the opening of some notable civic rather than ecclesiastical event. Ministers were pouring in by the score, and we were all ushered into the long picture gallery, where we presented our cards. The ministers of the Established Church of Scotland are about as fine a looking body of men as I have ever seen.

At eleven o'clock the door of the corridor leading from the picture gallery to the throne room was thrown open, and we were received by the Lord High Commissioner, the Marquis of Tweeddale. The halls were lined with soldiers and pages in powdered wigs, and the throne room was under the care of the constables of Holyrood.

At ten minutes to twelve a great flourish of trumpets announced the departure of the Commissioner for St. Giles' Church. The pipers commenced to blow, the bands began playing, the command "quick march" was given to the soldiers, and the immense crowd moved off, forming a long line of procession.

The whole proceeding struck me as being at least—novel. The blending of the sacred and the secular, the close proximity of the "sword of the spirit" and the ordinary steel sword, the mixture of red-coated soldiers of the crown, and the black-robed "soldiers of the Cross," produced an impression upon me: not altogether favourable to State religion.

After a short walk up High Street, I found myself in St. Giles' Cathedral. The sermon was preached by the retiring moderator, the Rev. Dr. Scott. The text was, "Let us go on to perfection," Hebrews vi, 1. Like many other Synod and Assembly ser-

mons, it was slightly disappointing. At the close of the service, we adjourned to the Convocation Hall, where the Assembly was formally opened.

The arrangement of things there attracted my attention. Behind the Moderator and clerks, and raised about four feet above them, covered by a large arch, was the throne-gallery, where sat Her Majesty's representative in military uniform, with his sword by his side. The Assembly was constituted in due form, and Dr. William Mair, of Earlstoun, was elected Moderator.

A document from the Queen, couched in Latin, appointing the Marquis of Tweeddale Lord High Commissioner, was then read to the Assembly by the clerk, Dr. Storey.

The audience listened very attentively, as the Latin sentences rolled off, and appeared to approve of the sentiments contained therein, judging from the applause that went up as the letter closed with "*Anno regni nostri Sexagesimo.*"

Then he read Her Majesty's personal letter to the Assembly, in which she expressed her love for, and interest in, the Church, and her determination to uphold the Presbyterian form of worship in Scotland.

The Marquis of Tweeddale then delivered his address, informing the Assembly that the Queen had granted the sum of £2,000 for the carrying on of the work of the Gospel in the Highlands of Scotland. He closed by inviting them, in the name of the Queen, "to proceed with the business for which they had been convened." After some routine work, the first meeting of the Assembly adjourned.

As usual with the General Assembly meetings, the seditious varied in edification and interest, some being dull and monotonous, others lively and interesting. At times the house went to sleep (metaphorically), again the debates were keen and warm.

The reports and statistics of the several committees were worthy of notice.

The Sunday-School Committee reported 2,181 schools, 227,987 scholars, 21,155 teachers, and £6,323 raised by collections. I was pleased to note strong recommendations for the adoption of regular children's services in the churches at stated periods.

The Home Mission Committee reported 80 mission churches, 212 missionaries employed, including ordained ministers, licentiates and students. Amount of money expended in that work during the past year, £12,082.

The report on church statistics was as follows: "Contributions, exclusive of seat rents, for the year 1896, £397,702. The number of communicants on the roll, 633,408. There are 9,707 elders in active service in the Church. There are 112 foreign missionaries in the field, and for this object £22,000 had been raised during the year.

The Temperance Committee submitted what they called a report, which began with the following sentence: "The problem